

# How to file a CA-2 for an occupational disease



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**C**arrying mail is tough, physical work that can take a toll on your body. Many letter carriers tolerate nagging aches and pains throughout their careers, often suffering permanent damage while attempting to “walk it off.” Fortunately, federal law provides compensation for these types of injuries, which are referred to as occupational diseases.

To successfully file an occupational disease claim, you need to build a foundation for the claim by first educating your doctor about the physical

nature of your work duties. Once your doctor knows what your work duties are, they need to provide a medical narrative that connects those work duties to the injury you are suffering. This is generally a three-step process.

**Step 1: Writing your work narrative**—Doctors are busy people and know little about what letter carriers’ duties are. For your doctor to formulate a medical opinion, the doctor must understand your day-to-day duties as a letter carrier. Providing a short, one-page description of an average workday will help your doctor comprehend the physical nature of letter carrier work.

Your work description should describe an average day sorting and delivering your route. Explain the physical acts of sorting and delivering your route; doctors don’t need to know about vehicle checks, hot cases or signing for accountables. They do need to know about the standing, walking, lifting, reaching, carrying, pushing and pulling you do every day.

Use terms like “approximately” or “about” when describing mail volumes and delivery times. Use conservative estimates of weights, distances, repetitions and the time it takes to perform each duty—never exaggerate the number of deliveries on your route or how long it takes to deliver.

Most importantly, describe the work factors that are appropriate for your injury. For example, for a shoulder injury, you want your doctor to know how much reaching, pushing, pulling and lifting you do on an average day. A series of short paragraphs should be enough to give your doctor an accurate picture of your work duties, so the doctor can provide an opinion on the causal relationship between specific work duties and the diagnosed injury or condition.

**Step 2: The doctor’s narrative**—Causal relationship is a medical issue and the medical evidence generally required to establish a causal relationship is a rationalized medical opinion by your doctor. A rationalized medical opinion is medical evidence that includes a doctor’s opinion on whether there is a causal relationship between the worker’s diagnosed condition and work factors.

The doctor’s opinion must be based on a complete fac-

tual and medical background of the injured worker, must be one of reasonable medical certainty, and must be supported by medical rationale explaining the nature of the relationship between the diagnosed condition and specific work factors.

In the medical narrative, your doctor will need to describe the physiological mechanisms by which specific work factors (standing, walking, carrying, pushing, pulling, etc.) caused the diagnosed condition. The doctor’s diagnosed conditions must be based on objective medical evidence such as tests, X-rays or MRIs, and should include the proper ICD codes.

Most doctors do not know that your work factors do not need to be the primary cause of your injury; in fact, the work factors can be a very small contributing factor for the claim to be accepted. OWCP will also accept a claim if the work factors have aggravated or made worse an existing injury that is not job-related.

OWCP requires the doctor’s opinion to be of reasonable medical certainty. A medical opinion couched in such terms as “might be,” “could be” or “may be” does not have as much value as an opinion stated with reasonable medical certainty.

Once you have the medical narrative describing the causal relationship between your work and your medical condition, ask your supervisor for a CA-2 or print one, which is available on the “Injured on the Job” page of the NALC website.

As you fill out the CA-2, you will come to question 11, which asks for the date you first became aware of the disease or illness. The answer is likely the first time you sought treatment. Question 12 asks for the date you first realized the disease or illness was caused or aggravated by your employment. The date of your doctor’s medical narrative will be the date you enter in question 12.

**Step 3: Submitting the CA-2**—Once you have completed your portion of the CA-2, make a copy of it and hand the original, along with your narrative, to your supervisor. Get the signed receipt portion of the CA-2 from your supervisor.

The Postal Service is required to send your CA-2 to the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs within 10 working days of receiving it from you. Once OWCP gets your CA-2, it will assign you a claim file number and send you a letter.

Medical reports should be sent directly to OWCP, not the Postal Service. Once you have the file number, you can mail all of the medical information, such as test results and medical narratives, directly to OWCP, or you can upload your documents directly to your file via OWCP’s ECOMP portal.

**OWCP normally takes 90 days to make a decision in an occupational disease claim.** That time can be shortened if you follow these steps and swiftly respond to any correspondence OWCP sends to you.